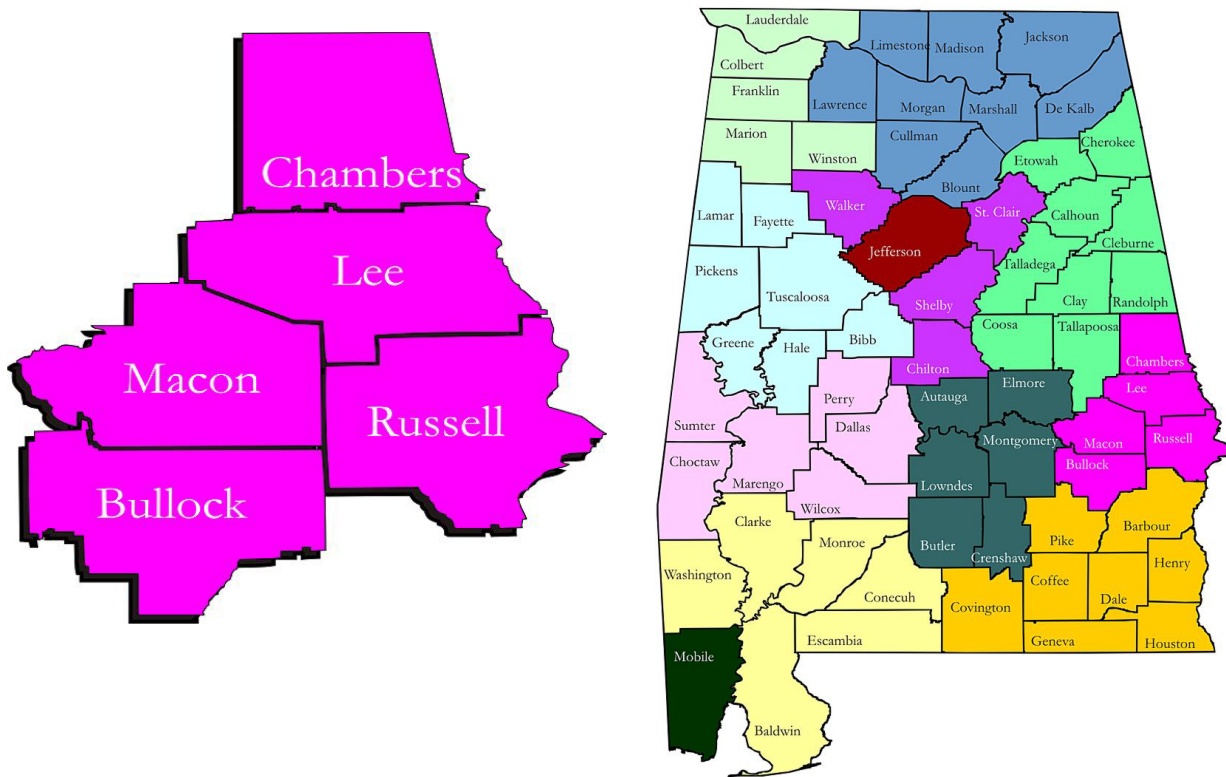


WIAA Region 8 Workforce Report



Summary

- Region 8 had a 4.5 percent unemployment rate in August 2005, with 5,060 unemployed. However, the five-county region has a roughly 33,750-strong available labor pool that is looking for better jobs and includes 28,700 underemployed workers. The underemployed are willing to commute farther and longer; for the one-way commute, 50 percent are prepared for 20 or more minutes longer and 35 percent will go 20 or more extra miles.
- In 2000, about 30,500 residents commuted out of the region for work, compared to 10,650 in-commuters. All counties, except Bullock, had a net commuter outflow. Eighty percent of the outflow was to Georgia. Significant commuting within the region suggests that the roads and highways must be maintained properly to ensure uninterrupted movement of workers as impeded movement of workers can slow economic development.
- Educational attainment in the region is better than for Alabama. Of the age 25 and over population, Alabama has 75 percent high school graduates and 19 percent bachelor's or higher degree holders, compared to 73 percent and 18.5 percent, respectively, for the region. Lee County stands out with 81 percent high school graduates and 28 percent bachelor's or higher degree holders.

- Employment is currently growing faster than the labor force. More jobs might reduce commuter outflow, but also presents a challenge to workforce development. Initiatives addressing this challenge should consider (i) focusing on hard-to-serve populations (e.g. out-of-school youth and illiterate adults), (ii) facilitating in-commuting, and (iii) helping communities gain new residents. Increasing population is generally more beneficial to communities than in-commuting. Hard-to-serve populations are often outside of the mainstream economy, poor, and have difficulty finding work, but are potential labor force participants. Investment in training, transportation, child care, infrastructure, etc. may be needed to tap this resource.
- By sector, the top five employers in the region are manufacturing; educational services; retail trade; health care and social assistance; and accommodation and food services. These five industries provided 45,570 jobs, 67 percent of the region total in the second quarter of 2004. Two of the leading employers—manufacturing and educational services—had higher average monthly wages than the \$2,361 regional average.
- On average about 3,850 jobs were created per quarter from second quarter 2001 to second quarter 2004; quarterly net job flows averaged 325. Job creation is the number of new jobs that are created either by new area businesses or through expansion of existing firms. Net job flows reflect the difference between current and previous employment at all businesses.
- Three occupations are both high-demand and fast-growing: Customer Service Representatives; Receptionists and Information Clerks; and Food Preparation Workers. The top five high-demand occupations are Cashiers; Retail Salespersons; Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers; Waiters and Waitresses; and General and Operations Managers. The top five fast-growing occupations are Personal and Home Care Aides; Pharmacists; Home Health Aides; Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers; and Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education.
- The top 50 highest earning occupations are mainly in health, legal, management, engineering, computer, and postsecondary education fields. Of the top 10 high-earning occupations, four are in health and four are in management. Almost all high-earning occupations require bachelor's or higher degrees.
- Fast-growing or high-demand occupations are generally not high-earning. Of 29 selected high-demand, nine selected fast-growing, and 50 selected high-earning occupations, only one high earning occupation, General and Operations Managers, is in the high-demand category. One occupation, Pharmacists, is both high-earning and fast-growing.
- The most relevant skills for high-demand and fast-growing occupations are basic: active listening, reading comprehension, speaking, writing, and service orientation. High-demand and high-growth occupations are also common to the leading employment sectors. Economic development should aim to diversify and strengthen the region's economy by retaining, expanding, and attracting more high-wage providing industries.
- The finding that basic skills are important—for high-demand, high-growth, and high-earning jobs—indicates a strong need for training in these skills. Ideally, all high school graduates should possess basic skills so that postsecondary and higher education can focus on other and

more complex skills as well as enhancing these basic skills. Employers should be an integral part of planning for training as they can help identify future skill needs and any existing gaps.

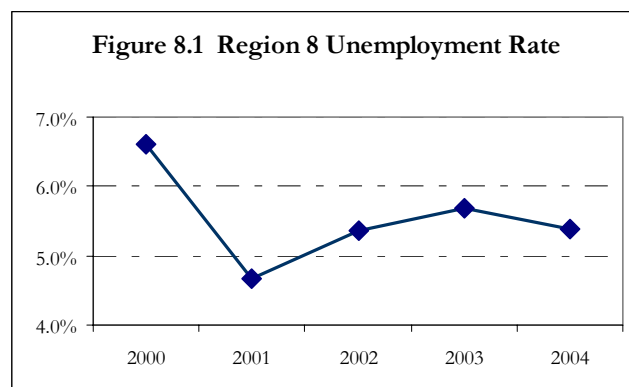
- Skill and education requirements for jobs keep rising. This emphasizes the need to raise educational attainment in the region and presents challenges to workforce development. It also presents opportunities for economic development through workforce development activities that involve postsecondary and higher education institutions. Higher incomes to graduates from these institutions would help to raise personal income for the region. Raising personal income by improving educational attainment for a region that has a large number of low wage jobs is an effective economic development strategy.
- A highly educated and productive workforce is a critical economic development asset. Together, workforce development and economic development can provide this asset and build a strong well-diversified regional economy. Indeed, one cannot achieve success without the other.

Workforce Supply

Labor Force Activity

The labor force includes all persons in the civilian noninstitutional population who are age 16 and over and who have, or are actively looking for, a job. Typically, those who have no job and are not looking for one are not included (e.g. students, retirees, and the disabled). Table 8.1 shows labor force information for Region 8 and its five counties for 2004 and August 2005. Shrinking labor force and rising numbers of employed residents lowered unemployment in 2005 for the region and its counties. Only Russell County's labor force grew; Bullock and Chambers counties' number of employed fell.

Unemployment rates in 2004 ranged from 4.2 percent to 11.6 percent for the counties, with 5.4 percent for the region. In August 2005, the unemployment range was 3.3 percent to 9.9 percent, with 4.5 percent for the region. The unemployment rate for the region sank to 4.7 percent in 2001, rose to 5.7 percent in 2003, and has been falling since (Figure 8.1). Employment, the number of full-time and part-time jobs, averaged 68,450 quarterly from the second quarter of 2001 to third quarter 2004 and has been recovering since 2003 (Figure 8.2).

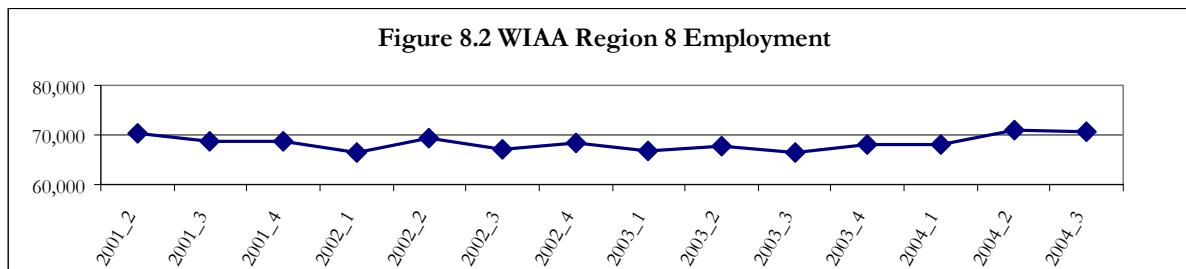


Source: Alabama Department of Industrial Relations.

Table 8.1 WIAA Region 8 Labor Force Information

	2004			
	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Rate
Bullock	3,919	3,464	455	11.61%
Chambers	16,789	15,629	1,160	6.91%
Lee	62,818	60,196	2,622	4.17%
Macon	8,663	8,092	571	6.59%
Russell	21,003	19,725	1,278	6.08%
WIAA Region 8	113,192	107,106	6,086	5.38%
Alabama	2,148,766	2,029,314	119,452	5.56%
U.S.	147,401,000	139,252,000	8,149,000	5.53%
	2005 August			
	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Rate
Bullock	3,841	3,462	379	9.87%
Chambers	16,486	15,534	952	5.77%
Lee	62,768	60,705	2,063	3.29%
Macon	8,602	8,115	487	5.66%
Russell	21,199	20,020	1,179	5.56%
WIAA Region 8	112,896	107,836	5,060	4.48%
Alabama	2,155,745	2,065,528	90,217	4.18%
U.S.	150,469,000	143,142,000	7,327,000	4.87%

Source: Alabama Department of Industrial Relations and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.



Source: Alabama Department of Industrial Relations and U.S. Census Bureau.

Commuting Patterns

In 2000, about 20,000 more people commuted out of the region for work than commuted in (Table 8.2). Eighty percent of the outflow was to Georgia. All counties, except Bullock, had net commuter outflows. There was significant commuting within the region as well.

Table 8.2 also shows the one-way average commute time and distance for workers in 2004; the data were collected as part of a survey on underemployment. The one-way commute takes less than 20 minutes for 56 percent of resident workers; between 20 and 40 minutes for 32 percent; and more than 40 minutes for 11 percent. Two percent of workers take more than an hour.

The commute is less than 10 miles for 43 percent of workers and about 33 percent travel 10 to 25 miles. Twenty-one percent of workers travel more than 25 miles one-way, with 4.6 percent exceeding 45 miles. This commuting data suggest that roads and highways must be maintained properly to ensure uninterrupted movement of workers so as to not slow economic development.

Population

The Region 8 population estimate of 239,951 for 2004 is 1.1 percent higher than was recorded for 2000 (Figure 8.3 and Table 8.3). Only Lee County's population grew. The region's population is projected to rise 11.8 percent in this decade to about 265,500 by 2010.

Lee County will grow the fastest, but Chamber and Macon will lose residents. Faster employment growth is likely to reduce out-commuting. Communities that experience rapid job gains should invest in amenities and infrastructure to attract new residents. This strategy could reduce commuter burden on the region's roads.

Table 8.2 WIAA Region 8 Commuting Patterns

Area	Inflow, 2000		Outflow, 2000	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Bullock	1,079	10.1	1,036	3.4
Chambers	1,791	16.8	4,251	13.9
Lee	3,340	31.4	11,850	38.9
Macon	1,096	10.3	1,698	5.6
Russell	3,344	31.4	11,649	38.2
WIAA Region 8	10,650	100.0	30,484	100.0
Average commute time (one-way), 2004				
				Percent of workers
Less than 20 minutes				55.5
20 to 40 minutes				31.9
40 minutes to an hour				9.2
More than an hour				2.0
Average commute distance (one-way), 2004				
				Percent of workers
Less than 10 miles				43.1
10 to 25 miles				32.5
25 to 45 miles				16.4
More than 45 miles				4.6

Note: Rounding errors may be present.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Alabama Department of Industrial Relations.

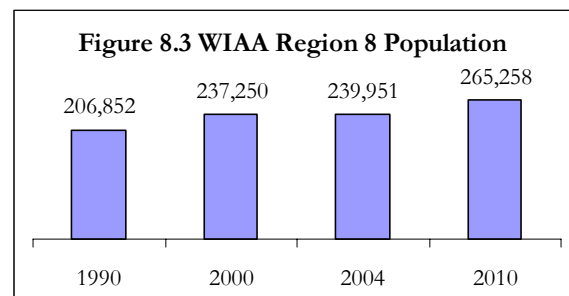


Table 8.3 WIAA Region 8 Population

	1990 Census	2000 Census	2004 Estimate	% Change 2000-2004	2010 Projected	% Change 2000-2010
Bullock	11,042	11,714	11,229	-4.1	12,145	3.7
Chambers	36,876	36,583	35,567	-2.8	36,355	-0.6
Lee	87,146	115,092	120,714	4.9	141,303	22.8
Macon	24,928	24,105	23,179	-3.8	23,389	-3.0
Russell	46,860	49,756	49,262	-1.0	52,066	4.6
WIAA Region 8	206,852	237,250	239,951	1.1	265,258	11.8
Alabama	4,040,587	4,447,100	4,530,182	1.9	4,838,812	8.8
U.S.	248,709,873	281,421,966	296,655,404	5.4	314,571,000	11.8

Source: Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama and U.S. Census Bureau.

Educational Attainment

Educational attainment of Region 8 residents who are 25 years old and over is shown below in Table 8.4 and Figures 8.4 and 8.5. About 78 percent graduated from high school and 23 percent hold a bachelor's or higher degree. Lee County stands out with 81 percent high school graduates and 28 percent bachelor's or higher degree holders. Educational attainment is important as skills rise with education and high wage 21st century jobs demand more skill sets.

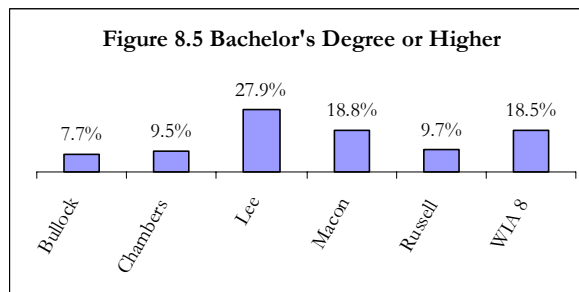
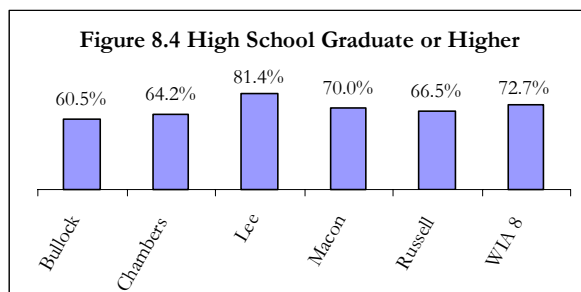


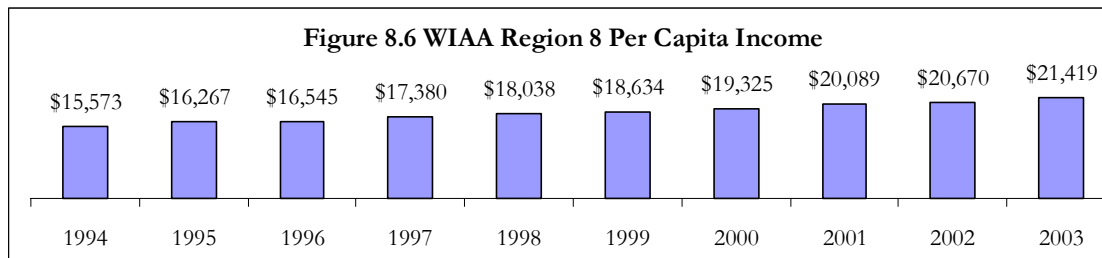
Table 8.4 Educational Attainment in 2000, Population 25 Years and Over

	Bullock	Chambers	Lee	Macon	Russell	Region 8
Total	7,570	24,497	62,170	13,955	32,107	140,299
No schooling completed	143	491	557	247	630	2,068
Nursery to 4th grade	117	251	456	170	482	1,476
5th and 6th grade	297	851	995	506	987	3,636
7th and 8th grade	588	1,464	1,592	622	1,675	5,941
9th grade	325	1,492	1,569	435	1,584	5,405
10th grade	565	1,603	2,234	610	2,028	7,040
11th grade	508	1,469	1,840	641	1,723	6,181
12th grade, no diploma	449	1,157	2,314	957	1,640	6,517
High school graduate/equivalent	2,667	7,863	16,576	3,486	10,594	41,186
Some college, less than 1yr	445	1,742	3,572	867	2,111	8,737
Some college, 1+ yrs, no degree	658	2,661	8,994	2,018	3,874	18,205
Associate degree	222	1,114	4,120	779	1,669	7,904
Bachelor's degree	330	1,553	9,402	1,446	2,009	14,740
Master's degree	208	581	4,793	878	825	7,285
Professional school degree	36	140	927	161	244	1,508
Doctorate degree	12	65	2,229	132	32	2,470

Source: Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama and U.S. Census Bureau.

Per Capita Income

Per capita income (PCI) in Region 8 was \$21,419 in 2003 (Figure 8.6), 38 percent higher than in 1994, and \$5,086 or 19 percent less than the Alabama average of \$26,505. Lee County had the highest PCI with \$22,278 and Macon had the lowest with \$17,319. All five counties' PCIs were below the state average.



Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis and Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama.

Underemployment and Available Labor

Labor force data are often limited to information on the employed and the unemployed that is available from government sources. However, this information is not complete from the perspective of employers. New or expanding employers are also interested in underemployment because current workers are potential employees. In fact, experience requirements in job ads are evidence that many prospective employers look beyond the unemployed for workers.

Workers in occupations that underutilize their experience, training, and skills are underemployed. These workers might look for other work because their current earnings are below what they believe they can get or because they wish to not be underemployed. Underemployment occurs for various reasons including (i) productivity growth, (ii) spousal employment and income, and (iii) family constraints or personal preferences. The various contributing factors combined with economic, social, and geographic characteristics of areas make underemployment unique to areas.

The existence of underemployment identifies economic potential that is not being realized. It is extremely difficult to measure this economic potential because of uncertainties regarding additional income that the underemployed can bring to an area. It is clear, however, that underemployment provides opportunities for selective job creation and economic growth. A business that needs skills prevalent among the underemployed could locate in WIAAs with such workers regardless of those areas' unemployment rates. A low unemployment rate, which may falsely suggest limited labor availability, is not a hindrance to the business.

The underemployed present a significant pool of labor because they tend to respond to job opportunities that they believe are better for reasons that include (i) higher income, (ii) better benefits, (iii) better terms and conditions of employment, and (iv) better match with skills, training, and experience. The underemployed also create opportunities for entry level workers as they leave lower-paying jobs for better-paying ones. Even if their previously held positions are lost or not filled (perhaps due to low unemployment), there is economic growth in gaining higher-paying jobs. Such income growth boosts consumption, savings, and tax collections. Quantifying the size of the underemployed is a necessary first step in exploiting it for economic development, workforce training, planning, and other uses.

WIAA Region 8 had an underemployment rate of 26.6 percent in 2004. Applying this rate to August 2005 labor force data means that about 28,700 employed residents were underemployed

(Table 8.5). Adding the unemployed gives a total available labor pool of 33,744 for the region. This pool is roughly seven times the number of unemployed and is a more realistic measure of the available labor in the region. However, prospective employers must be prepared to offer the underemployed higher wages, better terms of employment, or some other incentives to induce them to change jobs. Underemployment ranged from 21.6 percent for Lee County to 32.8 percent for Macon County. Lee County has the largest available labor and Bullock County has the smallest.

Table 8.5 Available Labor in WIAA Region 8

	<u>Region 8</u>	<u>Bullock</u>	<u>Chambers</u>	<u>Lee</u>	<u>Macon</u>	<u>Russell</u>
Labor Force	112,896	3,841	16,486	62,768	8,602	21,199
Employed	107,836	3,462	15,534	60,705	8,115	20,020
Underemployment rate	26.6%	25.9%	28.7%	21.6%	32.8%	26.3%
Underemployed workers	28,684	897	4,458	13,112	2,662	5,265
Unemployed	5,060	379	952	2063	487	1179
Available labor pool	33,744	1,276	5,410	15,175	3,149	6,444

Note: Rounding errors may be present. Based on August 2005 labor force data and 2004 underemployment rates.

Source: Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama and Alabama Department of Industrial Relations.

Workforce Demand

Industry Mix

The manufacturing sector was the leading employer with 11,559 jobs in the second quarter of 2004 (Table 8.6). The rest of the top five industries by employment are educational services; retail trade; health care and social assistance; and accommodation and food services. These five industries provided 45,570 jobs, 67 percent of the region total. The average monthly wage across all industries in the region was \$2,361. Two of the leading employers—manufacturing and educational services—paid more than this average. The highest average monthly wages were for utilities (\$3,312), manufacturing (\$3,268), and wholesale trade (\$3,086). Accommodation and food services paid the least at \$1,052. Construction had the highest average monthly new hire wages with \$2,629, followed by mining with \$2,626. Accommodation and food services paid the least average monthly new hire wages with \$754.

By broad industry classification, service producing industries provided about 71 percent of all covered jobs in the region in second quarter 2004 (Figure 8.7). Goods producing industries were next with 24 percent and public administration with 6 percent.

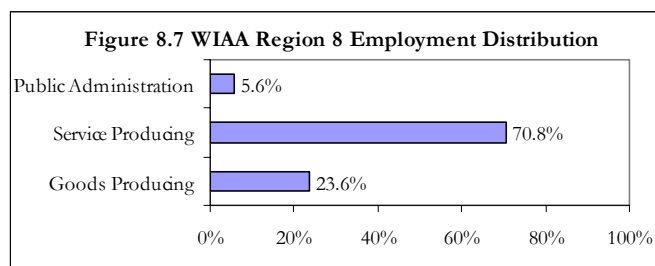


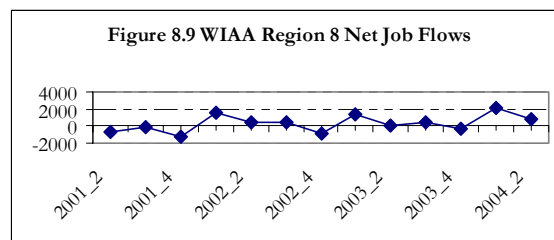
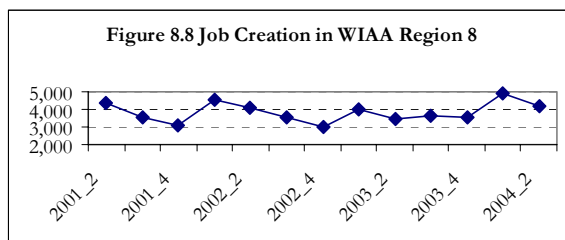
Table 8.6 Industry Mix (2nd Quarter 2004)

Industry by 2-digit NAICS Code	Total Employment	Share	Rank	Average Monthly Wage	Average Monthly New Hire Earnings
11 Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	1,107	1.62%	15	\$2,537	\$1,772
21 Mining	146	0.21%	20	\$3,043	\$2,626
22 Utilities	638	0.93%	18	\$3,312	\$2,207
23 Construction	3,363	4.92%	7	\$2,647	\$2,629
31-33 Manufacturing	11,559	16.90%	1	\$3,268	\$2,298
42 Wholesale Trade	1,195	1.75%	13	\$3,081	\$2,402
44-45 Retail Trade	8,741	12.78%	3	\$1,855	\$1,209
48-49 Transportation and Warehousing	2,031	2.97%	9	\$2,381	\$1,778
51 Information	768	1.12%	17	\$2,511	\$1,692
52 Finance and Insurance	1,444	2.11%	11	\$2,929	\$2,341
53 Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	988	1.44%	16	\$1,892	\$1,337
54 Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	1,335	1.95%	12	\$2,471	\$1,854
55 Management of Companies and Enterprises	162	0.24%	19	\$2,230	\$2,592
56 Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	3,210	4.69%	8	\$1,560	\$1,224
61 Educational Services	10,621	15.53%	2	\$2,894	\$1,616
62 Health Care and Social Assistance	7,338	10.73%	4	\$2,291	\$1,595
71 Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1,160	1.70%	14	\$1,445	\$911
72 Accommodation and Food Services	7,311	10.69%	5	\$1,052	\$754
81 Other Services (except Public Administration)	1,449	2.12%	10	\$1,645	\$1,390
92 Public Administration	3,828	5.60%	6	\$2,268	\$1,491
ALL INDUSTRIES	68,394	100.00%		\$2,361	

Source: Alabama Department of Industrial Relations and U.S. Census Bureau.

Job Creation and Net Job Flows

On average, about 3,850 jobs were created per quarter from second quarter 2001 to second quarter 2004 (Figure 8.8). Quarterly net job flows averaged 325 in the same period (Figure 8.9). Net job flows have ranged from a loss of 830 to a gain of about 2,200. Job creation refers to the number of new jobs that are created either by new area businesses or through the expansion of existing firms. Net job flows reflect the difference between current and previous employment at all businesses.



Source: Alabama Department of Industrial Relations and U.S. Census Bureau.

High-Demand Occupations

Table 8.7 shows the top 29 of about 500 occupations ranked by projected demand for jobs. Many of these occupations are common to the region's top five employment sectors: manufacturing; educational services; retail trade; health care and social assistance; and accommodation and food services. Thus these sectors will continue to dominate employment in the region. The top five high-demand occupations are Cashiers; Retail Salespersons; Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers; Waiters and Waitresses; and General and Operations Managers.

Fast-Growing Occupations

The nine fastest growing occupations ranked by projected growth of employment are listed in Table 8.8. The top five fast-growing occupations are Personal and Home Care Aides; Pharmacists; Home Health Aides; Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers; and Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education. Three occupations are both high-demand and fast-growing: Customer Service Representatives; Receptionists and Information Clerks; and Food Preparation Workers.

High-Earning Occupations

Any discussion of earnings must consider that wages vary with experience. Occupations with the highest entry wages may not necessarily have the highest average or experienced wages. Table 8.9 shows 50 selected highest earning occupations in the region. These high-earning occupations are mainly in health, legal, management, engineering, computer, and postsecondary education fields. They are generally not fast-growing or high-demand. One occupation, General and Operations Managers, is both high-earning and high-demand. One occupation, Pharmacists, is both high-earning and fast-growing.

Other Workforce Issues

Available Labor

The availability of labor is critical to economic development. WIAA Region 8 currently has a low unemployment rate, but it also has a 33,744-strong available labor pool that is looking for better jobs, typically higher-wage ones. This pool includes nearly 28,700 underemployed workers who are willing to commute farther and longer; 50 percent are prepared for 20 or more minutes longer and 35 percent for 20 or more extra miles.

Low wages at the available jobs and a lack of job opportunities in their areas are the primary reasons given for being underemployed. Retirement and disability are the primary reasons given for not working, but a lack of job opportunities is also frequently cited. Some nonworkers may become part of the labor force if their problems can be addressed. Economic development efforts should take these factors into consideration.

Table 8.7 Selected High-Demand Occupations (Base Year 2002 & Projected Year 2012)

Occupation	Annual Average Job Openings		
	Total	Due to Growth	Due to Separations
Cashiers	210	30	180
Retail Salespersons	145	35	110
Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers	145	40	105
Waiters and Waitresses	130	25	105
General and Operations Managers	60	20	40
Customer Service Representatives**	60	35	25
Registered Nurses	60	25	35
Office Clerks, General	55	10	45
Teacher Assistants	50	20	30
Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids	50	15	35
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	50	20	30
Secretaries, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	45	5	40
Child Care Workers	45	15	30
Truck Drivers, Heavy and Tractor-Trailer	45	20	25
Nursing Aides, Orderlies, and Attendants	45	20	25
Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	45	20	25
Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	40	15	25
First-Line Supervisors/Managers, Retail Sales	40	15	25
Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers	40	15	25
First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Office and Administrative Support Workers	35	10	25
Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	30	5	25
Secondary School Teachers, Except Special Education	30	10	20
Receptionists and Information Clerks**	30	15	15
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	30	5	25
Construction Laborers	25	15	10
Cooks, Fast Food	25	0	25
Sales Representatives, Except Technical and Scientific Products	25	10	15
Cooks, Institution and Cafeteria	25	5	20
Food Preparation Workers**	25	10	15

Note: A minimum of 25 average annual job openings is used as selection criterion and data are rounded to nearest 5.

** Qualify as both high-demand and fast-growing occupations.

*** The data for these occupations are confidential using Bureau of Labor Statistics standards.

Source: Alabama Department of Industrial Relations.

Table 8.8 Selected Fast-Growing Occupations (Base Year 2002 & Projected Year 2012)

Occupation	Employment		Percent Change	Annual Growth (Percent)	Total Annual Average Job Openings
	2002	2012			
Personal and Home Care Aides	180	270	50.0	4.14	15
Pharmacists	230	320	39.1	3.36	15
Home Health Aides	420	550	31.0	2.73	20
Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	380	490	28.9	2.57	20
Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education	320	410	28.1	2.51	15
Counter and Rental Clerks	260	330	26.9	2.41	15
Customer Service Representatives**	1,360	1,700	25.0	2.26	60
Receptionists and Information Clerks**	650	790	21.5	1.97	30
Food Preparation Workers**	430	520	20.9	1.92	25

Note: Selection criterion is annual growth rate of at least 1.9 percent. Employment level data are rounded to the nearest 10 and job openings data are rounded to the nearest 5.

** Qualify as both high-demand and fast-growing occupations.

*** The data for these occupations are confidential using Bureau of Labor Statistics standards.

Source: Alabama Department of Industrial Relations.

Table 8.9 Selected High-Earning Occupations

Occupation	Mean Annual Salary (\$)
Surgeons	180,856
Family and General Practitioners	146,370
Pediatricians, General	144,581
Chief Executives	135,304
Dentists, General	134,410
Law Teachers, Postsecondary	111,970
Lawyers	106,933
Engineering Managers	96,200
Natural Sciences Managers	88,795
General and Operations Managers	85,821
Mathematicians	83,366
Pharmacists	83,075
Chiropractors	82,514
Optometrists	81,806
Real Estate Brokers	81,723
Computer and Information Systems Managers	81,078
Health Specialties Teachers, Postsecondary	80,930
Marketing Managers	79,435
Sales Managers	78,957
Securities, Commodities, and Financial Services Sales Agents	78,458
Environmental Engineers	76,960
Computer Software Engineers, Systems Software	76,794
Chemical Engineers	76,502
Financial Managers	76,003
Airline Pilots, Copilots, and Flight Engineers	74,870
Medical and Health Services Managers	72,925
Electrical Engineers	72,904
Purchasing Managers	72,488
Engineering Teachers, Postsecondary	72,320
Computer Software Engineers, Applications	71,698
Mechanical Engineers	70,221
Education Administrators, Postsecondary	69,618
Industrial Production Managers	69,056
Management Analysts	68,806
Veterinarians	68,619
Forestry and Conservation Science Teachers, Postsecondary	68,610
Construction Managers	67,163
Sales Engineers	66,934
Computer Programmers	66,789
Operations Research Analysts	66,518
Physics Teachers, Postsecondary	65,710
Computer Systems Analysts	65,250
Industrial Engineers	65,125
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Technical and Scientific Products	64,979
Economics Teachers, Postsecondary	64,560
Education Administrators, Elementary and Secondary School	64,480
Architects, Except Landscape and Naval	63,627
Health and Safety Engineers, Except Mining Safety Engineers and Inspectors	63,502
Clinical, Counseling, and School Psychologists	63,253
Civil Engineers	63,190

Note: The list of occupations is specific to the region, but earnings are statewide. Only the 50 highest earning single occupations are presented. The list does not include occupations that are affected by confidentiality. Some high-earning occupational groups are not listed because earnings can vary considerably for occupations within these groups. Employment data are rounded to the nearest 10. The data provided are based on the November 2004 release of the Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) combined employment and wage file. Estimates for specific occupations may include imputed data.

"NA" indicates data items that are not publishable or not available.

Source: Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama and Alabama Department of Industrial Relations.

Employment is currently growing faster than the labor force. Higher employment demand could intensify commuter inflow, but also presents communities with opportunities to attract new residents. Some communities must be prepared to invest in amenities and infrastructure to support such growth because immigration is generally more beneficial to communities than in-commuting.

Immigration is one way of growing the labor force through growth in the population. The region's population growth rate is expected to be faster than the state's rate through 2010. Another strategy to expand the labor force to meet possible increases in employment demand is to raise labor force participation by focusing on hard-to-serve populations, which include persons in poverty, those receiving welfare, those in sparsely populated areas, those on active parole, and out-of-school youth. These people are often outside of the mainstream economy and poor. They usually have difficulty finding work because they have low levels of educational attainment, lack occupational skills, or face geographic or other barriers. Some investment in training, transportation, child care, infrastructure, etc. may be needed to tap these potential workers.

Skills

Jobs require skill sets and it is necessary that jobholders have the relevant skills. High earning occupations typically require more complex skills, which are obtained in the pursuit of the high educational attainment levels that such jobs require. Low earning occupations require fewer and more basic skill sets; some low earning occupations have no minimum skill set requirements (e.g. dishwashers and maids).

Table 8.10 shows the percentage of selected occupations in WIAA Region 8 that list a particular skill as primary. We define a primary skill as one in the top 10 of the required skill set for an occupation. O*NET Online provides skill sets for all occupations ranked by the degree of importance. Thus primary skills are more important than other skills. It is important to note that a particular skill may be more important and more extensively used in one occupation than another. Table 8.10 does not address such cross-occupational skill importance comparisons.

In general, basic skills are most frequently listed as primary. Science and critical thinking skills are primary for more selected high-earning occupations than selected fast-growing and selected high-demand occupations. A similar pattern holds for complex problem solving, resource management, and systems skills; these skills require longer training periods and postsecondary education. The region's high-demand and high-growth occupations are dominated by those for which the most relevant skills are active listening, reading comprehension, speaking, writing, and service orientation.

Education and Training Issues

Educational attainment in WIAA Region 8 is below that of the state. Seventy-three percent of residents age 25 and over have graduated from high school and 18.5 percent have a bachelor's or higher degree, compared to 75 percent and 19 percent, respectively, for Alabama. Lee County stands out with 81 percent high school graduates and 28 percent bachelor's or higher degree holders. Education and skill requirements for jobs keep rising and emphasize a very strong need to raise educational attainment in the region.

Table 8.11 shows the number of selected occupations in the region for which a particular education/training category is most common. In general, high-earning occupations typically require a bachelor's or higher degree. Most of the high-demand and fast jobs do not require postsecondary training; some form of on-the-job training is the minimum requirement. About 30 percent of fast-growing occupations require a bachelor's or higher degree. The challenge for the region is that future high-demand jobs are likely to require some postsecondary education and training.

Table 8.10 Share of Selected Occupations for Which Skill Is Primary

	Selected High-Demand Occupations	Selected Fast-Growing Occupations	Selected High-Earning Occupations
Basic Skills			
Active Learning	31%	33%	70%
Active Listening	79%	89%	84%
Critical Thinking	62%	56%	94%
Learning Strategies	41%	56%	18%
Mathematics	28%	44%	38%
Monitoring	38%	56%	30%
Reading Comprehension	72%	89%	96%
Science	0%	11%	38%
Speaking	72%	89%	66%
Writing	38%	56%	48%
Complex Problem Solving Skills			
Complex Problem Solving	0%	0%	42%
Resource Management Skills			
Management of Financial Resources	3%	0%	12%
Management of Material Resources	3%	0%	2%
Management of Personnel Resources	10%	0%	14%
Time Management	48%	44%	52%
Social Skills			
Coordination	28%	33%	28%
Instructing	45%	44%	30%
Negotiation	7%	0%	18%
Persuasion	7%	0%	16%
Service Orientation	48%	56%	12%
Social Perceptiveness	55%	67%	16%
Systems Skills			
Judgment and Decision Making	17%	0%	60%
Systems Analysis	0%	0%	14%
Systems Evaluation	0%	0%	20%
Technical Skills			
Equipment Maintenance	10%	11%	0%
Equipment Selection	10%	11%	4%
Installation	3%	11%	0%
Operation and Control	3%	11%	4%
Operation Monitoring	7%	11%	2%
Operations Analysis	0%	0%	24%
Programming	0%	0%	6%
Quality Control Analysis	0%	11%	4%
Repairing	7%	11%	0%
Technology Design	0%	0%	12%
Troubleshooting	7%	0%	12%
Note: Definitions for skill types and skills are available at http://online.onetcenter.org/skills/			
Source: O*NET Online and Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama.			

Table 8.11 Number of Selected Occupations with Most Common Education/Training Requirement

Most Common Education/Training Requirements Categories	Selected High-Demand Occupations	Selected Fast-Growing Occupations	Selected High-Earning Occupations
First Professional Degree		1	10
Doctoral Degree			5
Master's Degree			3
Work Experience Plus a Bachelor's or Higher Degree	1		13
Bachelor's Degree	2		17
Associate Degree	1		
Postsecondary Vocational Training	1	1	
Work Experience in a Related Occupation	2		1
Long-term On-the-job Training		1	
Moderate On-the-job Training	8	1	1
Short-term On-the-job Training	14	5	

Note: The last three education and training requirements categories are based on the length of time it generally takes an average worker to achieve proficiency for occupations in which postsecondary training is usually not needed for entry. **Long-term** requires more than 12 months on-the-job training that can include up to four years of apprenticeship, formal classroom instruction, and short-term employer-sponsored training. Trainees are generally considered to be employed in the occupation. **Moderate-term** requires one to 12 months on-the-job experience and informal training. **Short-term** requires up to one month on-the-job experience and training.

Source: O*NET Online; Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama; and Alabama Department of Industrial Relations.

The finding that basic skills are important for all the selected occupations (Table 8.10) indicates a strong need for training in these skills. Ideally, all high school graduates should possess basic skills so that postsecondary and higher education can focus on other and more complex skill types while enhancing basic skills. Employers should be an integral part of planning for training as they can point out the skill needs of the future and any existing gaps.

High-earning occupations make up a small component of total employment and jobs offered by top employers in the region. Diversifying the region's economy would strengthen it. Economic development should also focus on retaining, expanding, and attracting businesses that provide more high-earning jobs. Workforce development should pay attention to postsecondary and higher educational systems to ensure a ready and available workforce for these businesses. The higher incomes to graduates of these institutions would help raise personal income for the region. Raising personal income by improving educational attainment and technological skills is an effective economic development strategy.

A highly educated and productive workforce is a critical economic development asset. Together, workforce development and economic development can provide this asset and build a strong well-diversified regional economy. Indeed, one cannot achieve success without the other.

Regional Advisory Council Annual Report: Implications for Action

The material in this section is from the July 2005 Annual Report of the Region 8 Workforce Development Regional Advisory Council. It does not necessarily reflect the opinions of the direct contributors to this workforce report.

Action issue 1. Where must education and training opportunities be advanced or marketed to meet the demands of critical skills/worker shortages and high-growth occupations in the region?

A focused effort in the region to promote the workforce development plan is needed in some of the more rural counties. Services deemed appropriate for the area's industries should be coordinated with the major employers. Distribution of information regarding training opportunities should be provided to displaced workers and those currently employed so that career changes later in life are not disruptive or traumatic experiences. Some areas of the region address these needs well.

Because of the differences between educational opportunities in Region 8, a need to increase the opportunity for hands on career technical programs and classes at the high school level to address the skills and needs of regional employers was identified. This included training programs that addressed health care and manufacturing needs seen in the community. To provide a standard of excellence for these high school programs and increase their alignment to postsecondary training and industry, it was encouraged that these programs participate and complete a business/industry certification program.

Action issue 2. How can/should worker skills be generally upgraded in the region?

Region 8 members expressed a concern that educational institutions should communicate with industry and identify the skills required so that training programs and curricula can be aligned with industry/manufacturing needs. Better linkages should be developed between these two stakeholders to facilitate the sharing of information.

In addition, companies that require upgrading the skills of their existing employees should be knowledgeable of resources for assistance. Coordination of these services is essential to maximizing service delivery and reducing duplication of services between organizations. The Auburn Training Connection and Southern Union State Community College are working well together in the Auburn-Opelika Metropolitan area.

Action issue 3. How can future workers be helped to make better choices about career preparation?

As mentioned earlier, it is imperative to coordinate services between the secondary, postsecondary, government, and the employment sector, resulting in a skilled workforce. Stronger ties between secondary and postsecondary programs are essential in building the foundation for an effective transition to viable career pathways. An emphasis on career guidance through a strong and effective counseling system in the school systems is important. Expanding the use of job shadowing and the Choices program offered through some chambers of commerce would achieve positive results. Implementation of a structured apprenticeship program is needed. Career Technical programs at community colleges can actively participate in the dissemination of program information to the middle grades and secondary programs, explaining entry requirements, and exposing students to the opportunities in industry/manufacturing. The media and representatives from the state level can play a supportive role by highlighting careers in growing fields and the benefits of training beyond the high school level. This information is being distributed to students in the Auburn city school system via the Auburn Training Connection but could always be strengthened.

Action issue 4. Should worker assessment and credentialing be increased in the region (pre-service and in-service training)?

Yes, AIDT has been successful in Region 8 in the past in pre-hire training. Regional coordination is required for similar programs for existing industry. The region should be proactive in providing training in areas deemed to be needed in the future. Industry in Region 8 is more concerned with worker performance than worker credentials therefore shorter, skill specific training should be offered in addition to traditional curriculum.

Other action issues. As mentioned earlier, health care has occupations that are experiencing phenomenal growth and worker shortages. The community colleges and career/technical colleges have training opportunities available, but these programs need to be expanded and aligned with the future needs of the expanding health care providers within the region. East Alabama Health Care has developed a comprehensive program which addresses the needs of individuals from birth to death and offers a wide range of employment opportunities to the workforce within Region 8. The development of a strong partnership between the health care organizations within Region 8 and the various training providers needs to be emphasized so that workers can be trained and equipped to work within the areas of need.

Action issue 5. What roles should be played by the various stakeholder groups (employers, partner agencies, elected officials, faith-based/ community-based organizations, Workforce Investment Board members, grantor agencies, news media, vendors/ contractors) at the local, regional, state and federal levels in implementing the action steps outlined above?

Employers. Employers should communicate their workforce training needs to their local economic development organizations and the appropriate training providers, and also provide feedback on training effectiveness. Employers' participation in alliances with career centers, career technical colleges, and workforce development programs is essential.

Partner agencies. Collaboration of services provided by partner agencies is essential; to accomplish this, these agencies should share information with each other about workforce training plans and initiatives that will benefit their client base. These agencies should also lead the effort to disseminate information to government, secondary, postsecondary, and employment sectors. They should provide insight into current and future education needed by area industry.

Elected officials. Elected officials should become familiar with workforce development issues and offer support whenever appropriate. They should be knowledgeable of their region's needs and work with other elected officials to advocate for the region.

Faith- and community-based organizations. When these organizations have the opportunity to provide support or participate in the distribution of information they should be included.

News media. The media, through the use of public service announcements, should help highlight career opportunities and education or training programs available in the region. The focus should be on career entry requirements and career pathways that lead to long-term success.

It should be remembered that local entities are the direct connection to local employers. These entities should collaborate regionally to address similar needs, presenting these where appropriate to the state and federal agencies. State funding should be available to these local entities, local schools

for needed technical training classes and programs, as well as for career technical and community colleges.